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The Reform of
the Poor Law.

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The Reform of the Poor Law.*

I.—THE NEED FOR POOR LAW REFORM.

ONE of the most urgent needs for democratic social reorganisation is found in the existing system of Poor Law Relief. The present administration of the nation's provision for its poorer citizens is, in many ways, scandalously harsh to those who have the misfortune to be driven to accept the pauper dole. The ruling classes have deliberately made the lot of these poorer citizens so degraded that the more sensitive will die lingering deaths rather than submit to it, whilst others prefer going to gaol. In the hope of getting rid of the burden of maintaining the poor, and of throwing every one upon his own resources, the comfort, self-respect and personal dignity of whole generations of paupers have been, since 1834, ruthlessly sacrificed. Although no instructed person would for a moment venture to run any risk of restoring the evil days of the Old Poor Law, it is time to recognise that the present system must be fundamentally reformed. After fifty years' trial it has failed to extinguish pauperism and destitution. It succeeds in obviating any but a few cases of direct starvation; but it does not prevent a widespread demoralisation. It often fails to rescue the children from a life of pauperism, and the aged from public disgrace. More important than all, it fails utterly in its chief and most important purpose, of encouraging the provident and the worthy, and discouraging the spendthrift and the drunkard. It is, indeed, now coming to be denounced by experienced philanthropists as the greatest of all the existing hindrances to provident saving, and an instrument of serious degeneration of character among the English people.†

Nevertheless, such is the neglect of social reforms that neither the Liberal nor the Conservative Party so much as mentions Poor

* The greater part of this Tract is reprinted, by permission of the proprietors of the *Contemporary Review*, from an article by Sidney Webb in that magazine for July, 1890, under the same title. Besides the authorities incidentally referred to, the following works may be mentioned as dealing with the English Poor Law:—Sir F. M. Eden's “State of the Poor”; Sir G. Nicholl's “History of the English Poor Law”; Dr. F. Ashcroft's “English Poor Law”; Rev. T. W. Fowle's “The Poor Law” (a convenient manual); and, above all, the great Poor Law Report of 1834, republished by the House of Commons in 1885 as “H. C. 347,” price 2s. 5d.

† See “Thrift and Independence,” by Canon Blackley; Mackay's “The English Poor”; the Charity Organisation Society's publications, *passim*; Fawcett's “Pauperism”; and the evidence given before the Select Committee on National Provident Insurance, H.C. 270 of 1885.

Reform of the Poor Law.

Law Reform. The sufferings of the paupers, the degradation of the class from which these are mainly drawn, and even the neglect of the children among them, fail to interest either Mr. Gladstone or Lord Salisbury. For, indeed, the paupers have no votes.

Socialists, who object to an industrial system which condemns to pauperism one-tenth of the population, believe that the greater part of the need for Poor Relief would cease if the owners of land and capital were compelled to restore to the workers collectively the tribute of rent and interest which is now exacted from them individually. Nevertheless, in a land of accident and sickness, poverty cannot be wholly extinguished until a complete Communism is reached. Some system of relief of the destitute must therefore continue to exist for a long time to come. This cannot be left to private charity. Socialists assert, with Bentham, that all such Poor Relief should be administered under the fullest public responsibility by freely elected public bodies. They believe that any attempt to substitute the organisation of voluntary charity for public relief must prove even more disastrous than a bad Poor Law.

Moreover, it must not be forgotten that no scheme which aims at the abolition or diminution of the present revenue from Poor Rates can gain the support either of the public or of the political economist. These ten millions sterling, virtually a share of the rental of the country, are as much the property of the poor as their wages, and no proposal can be for a moment admitted which contemplates the absorption of this tribute by the landlords or the middle class. National Insurance or Poor Law Reform can alike be but suggestions for the better administration of the collective revenues of the poor—all that is left to them in place of the monastic endowments, the mediaeval charities and the common lands.

II.—THE NUMBER OF OUR PAUPERS.

Those who talk glibly about the abolition of the Poor Law can hardly have any adequate conception of the extent and character of the pauper class. It seems to have been assumed by the authors of the Act of 1834 that real destitution might fairly be regarded as an exceptional and accidental state, and that the awful permanence of the pauper class was merely the result of the demoralising old system. This idea is encouraged by the optimistic statistics reiterated by the Local Government Board, which show: "That the mean number of paupers relieved in the parochial year ending at Lady Day 1889, was smaller in proportion to the population than in any other parochial year included in the table. It amounted to 795,617, or a thirty-sixth of the estimated population."* Including Scotland and Ireland, the total becomes over a million.

A million of our fellow-citizens in pauperism is more than a trifle. But that is not the whole tale. It has been pointed out over and over again that the Local Government Board statistics of pauperism, and especially the references to "one thirty-sixth of the

* P. lxi of C—5813.

population," are misleading. They record merely the number of persons in actual receipt of Poor Law relief on one particular day. But Poor Law relief is now usually given for short periods at a time; and a large proportion of those who become paupers during any one year are not in receipt of relief during the whole of the year. The plan of granting relief only for short periods at a time is steadily becoming general.

In 1857, a careful computation was made in various ways of the number of different persons who, during the year, were paupers at one time or another. The total was found to be $3\frac{1}{2}$ times the number for one day, and this calculation has since usually been accepted.* Hence, instead of 2·8 per cent. we get nearly 10 per cent. of the population, or at least 3,500,000, as the class actually pauper during any one year.

Nor is this the worst aspect of the case. While a man or woman is in the prime of life, and free from sickness or accident, it may be assumed that pauperism is relatively exceptional. The appalling statistics of the pauperism of the aged are carefully concealed in all official returns. No statistics are given by the Local Government Board as to the percentage of aged paupers. No information was given on this point, even in the census of 1881. Although the occupations at each age were then obtained, the Registrar-General discreetly and humorously merged all paupers over sixty in the class "retired from business," so that the enriched army contractor and his aged workpeople were combined to swell this one category.

In 1885, Canon Blackley found that in his parish, 37 per cent. of the deaths of persons over sixty, during fifteen years, had been those of paupers. He obtained returns from twenty-five other rural parishes, and found that 42·7 per cent. of deaths of persons over sixty were those of paupers.† Returns obtained from twenty Unions in England, selected entirely at haphazard, and including metropolitan and provincial, urban and rural districts, show the following results :

	Indoor.	Outdoor.	Total.
Total paupers in 20 Unions...	12,669	15,922	28,591
Number over sixty-five years of age	4,332	7,112	11,444
Percentage	... ... ...	33 45 40	
Number over seventy years of age...	2,728	4,728	7,456
Percentage	... ... ...	21 30 26	

If we may assume these Unions to be fairly representative of the whole—and the results coincide closely with those given by other tests—it would follow that out of the 817,190 persons simultaneously in receipt of relief in England and Wales, on the 1st of January, 1889, there would be at least 250,000 over 65, and 200,000 over 70 years of age.‡ At the census of 1881, the percentage of persons over

* See Dudley Baxter's "National Income," p. 87; and Mulhall's "Dictionary of Statistics," p. 346.

† Report of Committee on National Provident Insurance," p. 159 of H.C. 208, 1886.

‡ See House of Commons Return, No. 36 of 1890.

those ages to the whole population was 4·57 and 2·64 respectively. Among the estimated population on January 1, 1889, of 28,628,804, there would accordingly be about 1,309,000 persons over 65. One in five of these is a pauper. There are approximately 756,000 persons over 70. Of these two out of seven are permanent paupers. Of the 250,000 paupers over 65, about 200,000 get outdoor relief; of the 200,000 over 70, about 150,000 receive this weekly dole; the remainder are in the workhouse infirmary, or aimlessly gazing at vacancy in the dreary "idle room" of the workhouse itself.

Extending these statistics roughly and hypothetically to the United Kingdom, with its million of simultaneous paupers, and its 38 millions of population, we find about 1,700,000 persons of 65 years of age, of whom about 325,000 are permanent paupers; and about 1,000,000 persons over 70, of whom 250,000 are permanent paupers. Other statistics go to confirm this broad result.

In London, one person in every five will die in the workhouse, hospital or lunatic asylum. In 1888, out of 79,099 deaths in London, 41,505 being over 20, 10,170 were in workhouses, 7,113 in hospitals, and 380 in lunatic asylums, or altogether 17,663 in public institutions.* Moreover, the percentage is increasing. In 1887 it was 20·6 of the total deaths; in 1888 it rose to 22·3. The increase was exclusively in the deaths in workhouses and workhouse infirmaries. Considering that comparatively few of the deaths are those of children, it is probable that one in every four London adults will be driven into these refuges to die, and the proportion in the case of the "manual labor class" must of course be still larger.

Nor is there much hope of appreciable reduction in these figures at any early date. The proportion of paupers to population has remained practically stationary for the last twelve years.† The steady diminution in the number of able-bodied adults relieved is counterbalanced by an equally steady growth in the number of sick persons and lunatics, for whom collective provision is now made, as well as apparently by a slight rise in the number of the children and the aged. We may for some time to come reckon on having to make constant public provision for the needs of a million people in receipt of relief, representing a pauper population of at least three millions. It accordingly behoves us to see that this collective provision is as far as possible prevented from having demoralising or other injurious effects. Collective provision, when not combined with collective control of industry, may easily become demoralising to character and detrimental to the best interests of the recipients; and against this danger we must jealously guard. But we need not deliberately add to the possible objective demoralisation of the collective provision an unnecessary subjective demoralisation due to public stigma or disgrace. We must depauperise our deserving paupers. The whole range of Poor Law experience up to 1834 appeared to show

* Registrar-General's Report, 1889, C—5846, pp. 2, 72 and 94.

† See Local Government Board Report, C—5813.

that public boards could not be trusted to discriminate between individual cases ; and the cast-iron rigor of the New Poor Law was the inevitable result. What we have been learning since 1834 is that discrimination must be more and more exercised between classes of paupers, not between individual cases, and that any Poor Law reform must necessarily proceed on this basis.

We have hitherto been so impressed with the danger of increasing the number of the shiftless poor, that we have managed to exercise a degrading and demoralising effect on those persons, many times more numerous, whose poverty is their misfortune, not their fault. We must now try a bolder experiment in what is necessarily our great collective laboratory of individual character. The time has come for us to maintain not only the bare existence, but the respectability of the aged, infirm, and orphaned poor, rather than content ourselves with the mere repression of the idle rogue and vagabond, whom the existing social order has often demoralised beyond redemption.

III.—STATE PENSIONS FOR THE AGED.

The Poor Law Commissioners did not, in their great Report of 1834, recommend the withdrawal of outdoor relief from the aged or the infirm. The common impression that they advocated the total abolition of outdoor relief is incorrect. The whole drift of their conclusions is against any subsidy in aid of wages ; but they did not regard collective provision for old age as any real allowance in aid of wages, in the sense of wages being likely to be higher if no such provision were made. Modern political economists cannot do otherwise than confirm this view.

No determined attempt has accordingly been made, except in London, Manchester, and a few other places, to abolish outdoor relief to the aged ; and the statistics already quoted appear to prove that at least one-fifth of the people who attain the age of sixty-five are compelled to resort to the relieving officer for that bare subsistence upon which they linger out their lives.

Nothing can be more discouraging to provident saving, even where it is possible, than our present practice in such cases. When a man is absolutely destitute we provide for him a bare subsistence. If he can manage to save, by the time he is sixty-five, as much as £150, he can provide for himself and wife practically as well as he and she would be provided for if they had saved nothing at all. Once past that minimum, there is every inducement to save which "gentility" and independence can offer. Anything short of that minimum is virtually useless. Poor Law relief cannot legally be given except to the absolutely destitute ; and the aged domestic servant, or farm-laborer, who has accumulated £50, must dissipate

that small hoard before his future will be secured from want.* The man who has a shilling a week from his friendly society is legally no better off than he who has nothing.† Both must be just kept alive, and legally neither can demand more.

Now the virtual minimum which enables an aged couple to dispense with poor law relief is far beyond the reach of a large proportion of the population. Instead, however, of encouraging them to save as much as they can towards their support, we, in effect, discourage them by making them no better off than those who save nothing at all.

Would it not be better frankly to recognise the provision of a minimum pension for old age as a collective charge? Every person must necessarily pay rates and taxes in one shape or another all his life long. It seems desirable to promote in every way the feeling that "the Government" is no entity outside of ourselves, but merely ourselves organised for collective purposes. Regarding the State as a vast benefit society, of which the whole body of citizens are necessarily members, the provision of pensions to the aged appears to be an obvious expansion of the Democratic idea.

At present we give a superannuation allowance to about 160,000 retired civil servants, military and naval officers and men, policemen, postmen, &c. The system is being extended to elementary school teachers and nurses. In all these cases the pension is given practically as a matter of right; it is granted in addition to whatever may have been saved by the recipient; and it carries with it no stigma of public disgrace.

We also give what are virtually superannuation allowances to 250,000 aged paupers, besides workhouse accommodation to 75,000 more. In their case the pension is awarded as of grace; it is only awarded where there are no savings, or where the savings have been consumed; and it is accompanied by public opprobrium and legal disqualification for the duties of citizenship.

The result in the first case is to encourage thrift and saving to supplement the pension, without the slightest demoralisation of character. The result in the second case is absolutely to discourage thrift and saving, and to break down whatever character had survived the losing fight of life. If we intend to give pensions to our aged poor, as we virtually now do, had we not better do so in such a way as to improve rather than to injure their character, and in a

* A domestic servant who, with incredible perseverance and patience, had saved up some £60 or £70, found this little hoard gradually melting away in her struggle to maintain her respectability, and appeared before the Whitechapel Board of Guardians with the balance, asking what she should do. Legally, the board could have given no relief until the amount was dissipated. Ultimately an adequate annuity was privately purchased for her, the extra sum required being found by subscription.

† So absurd is this legal discouragement of saving, that a practice is growing up of allowing half of any such pension to benefit the pauper—thus, if he has two shillings a week from his club, the normal relief is reduced only by one shilling. This illegal expedient is connived at by the Local Government Board.

manner calculated to promote rather than to discourage their own efforts to provide for their old age?

This proposal, though it is essentially one for National Insurance, must not be confounded with the current schemes which bear that name. The poor of this country will never vote away the poor-rate. No Government is at all likely to attempt to collect compulsory insurance premiums from men already supporting their trade-unions and friendly societies, their benefit clubs and their building societies, and paying, moreover, a not inconsiderable poor-rate. Nor is there any reason for any such collection. The expenditure and the revenue sides of the Budget ought economically to be kept distinct. If aged pensions are desirable let us have them. When the funds come to be raised, let it be done according to the classic economic maxims of taxation. It is pretty clear that these maxims will yield no support to the imposition of what would be virtually a new poll-tax.

The Rev. W. Moore Ede suggests* that certain payments might be required from the recipients of the aged pension as a test of thrift, and a means of improving character. Without for a moment countenancing the heartless hypocrisy which recommends "thrift" to men who are in deplorable need of more money to spend on the immediate well-being of their families, Mr. Ede may have good reason to think that reform may most easily begin by granting aged pensions at first only to those persons who can show that they have made some attempt partially to provide for their old age. At present such persons often end their days in the work-house. A large number of those compelled in their old age to resort to this refuge for the destitute have made ineffectual efforts at thrifty provision for their declining years. In 1881, out of 183,872 inmates of workhouses (one-third being children and another third women) no fewer than 11,304 had been members of benefit societies. In 3,913 cases the society had broken up, usually from insolvency.† A better arrangement can surely be made. The possession of small savings, continued subscription to a friendly society or club, life insurance, or lengthy membership of a trade-union, co-operative or building society, might all be accepted as relevant evidence of providence. But the object of the measure would be defeated unless the thrift condition were made easy enough to be satisfied by the poorest class of laborers, of merely average foresight and strength of character. At present we fail to encourage thrift because we stigmatise all as semi-criminals who fall below a quite impossible standard. If we really desire to comfort and help the weak-hearted, and to strengthen such as do stand, we must pitch our requirements so as to be within reach of their attainment.

* "A Scheme for National Pensions."

† House of Commons Return, 1881, No. 444.

It will at first be contended by members of the Charity Organisation Society on the one hand, and by the officials of friendly societies on the other, that any such public provision of honorable pensions would seriously discourage and thwart the efforts now being made to create private superannuation funds. There is, however, good reason for supposing that this would not be the case. At present these efforts are hindered by the futility of subscribing for anything short of a pension adequate for maintenance.* Anything less than this amount merely goes in aid of the rates, by reducing the amount of relief required. But once let the public pension be independent of other means, and it will become worth while to subscribe for an annuity of even sixpence per week. The great hindrance to saving at present is the hopelessness of being able to save enough. With a minimum pension assured, even the smallest addition becomes worth providing. If membership of a friendly society or a life insurance policy carried with it almost a certainty of an honorable State pension, instead of degrading Poor Law relief, the strongest possible encouragement would be given to the admirable efforts now being made by the existing popular agencies for saving which are already doing so much for the more prosperous of our artisan classes. At present they do not succeed to any extent in providing for old age. Their benefits for sickness absorb practically all the available savings of the poor. The cost of providing adequate pensions is found to be too serious for the great friendly societies, and for any but a few of the more powerful trade-unions. The financial equilibrium of some of these is more than doubtful. But small additions to the public pension could at once be made attractive to tens of thousands who could never aspire to obtain even ten pounds a year.

There is a further direction in which these public pensions would encourage individual effort and social sympathy. Nothing is more brutalising than the manner in which the grown-up children of paupers are virtually encouraged to treat their aged parents. The Guardians have the greatest possible difficulty in obtaining contributions from sons towards the maintenance of their pauper parents. The money is given grudgingly, *because it merely saves the rates*. But once let it become possible for the poor, as it is for the middle-class and the rich, to soothe and comfort the declining years of their parents by those small gifts which cost so little and mean so much, and we may have at least a chance of awakening those filial feelings which go far to humanise and elevate personal character. If a son's assistance to his State-pensioned father or mother means the addition of tobacco or tea to their bare subsistence, that assistance is a

* "The Manchester Unity has long desired to establish annuity or superannuation benefit funds; to commence at sixty-five is recommended, and not less than 5s. per week. The cost of such a benefit has hitherto proved deterrent." (Evidence of Mr. Watson, actuary to Manchester Unity of Odd Fellows, before Committee on National Insurance, H.C. 270, 1885, p. 66.) "After two years only four members had joined the fund." (Evidence of Mr. Holmes, a director, p. 59.)

great deal more likely to be given than when it means merely the reduction of his parent's cost to the parish. At present we deliberately dry up and starve the higher feelings of the poor.

Some persons will be frightened at the cost of providing any widespread system of aged pensions. It must, however, be remembered that the proposal involves really no new expense to the community. The aged poor are in any case maintained at the cost of the able-bodied workers; and the substitution of pensions for Poor Law relief is merely a readjustment. It may be assumed that in the United Kingdom to-day there would be about 1,700,000 persons over sixty-five. Of these probably 150,000 already receive public pensions of one kind or another, and about 325,000 are in receipt of Poor Law relief, costing on an average £10 10s. 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. each annually.* What proportion of the others would be eligible for and would apply for a pension it is impossible to predict. If the pension of £10 per head were made universal the extra cost involved would be covered by less than a quarter of the yield of a re-assessment of the present (nominal) four shillings in the pound Land Tax.

If the pension were made payable at seventy years of age, only 2 $\frac{2}{3}$ per cent. of the population would be alive to claim it, or just a million for the United Kingdom, of whom probably 250,000 are already paupers, and perhaps 100,000 public pensioners. The extra charge involved would, in this case, not exceed threepence in the pound on the Income Tax.

But a beginning might be made by sanctioning a certain number of pensions every year, within a fixed limit, the number being gradually increased so as to absorb more and more of those who would otherwise end their days as paupers. It must never be forgotten that the object of the pension system is not only the comfort of the individual pensioner, but also the stoppage of the degradation and demoralisation of the existing pauper class. The main object is to avail ourselves of the salutary aspect of individual responsibility by removing the present hopelessness. We must put some water into the pump in order to make it draw.

IV.—EFFICIENT EDUCATION FOR THE CHILDREN.

As the State undertakes to fulfil all the duties of parentage to over 50,000 children (this is the average number of indoor pauper children: 32,000 of them are actually orphans),† and prevents, moreover, any interference by their relatives in the matter, it is clear that the State is bound, as a matter both of morality and public policy, to ensure that these duties are fulfilled in the very best possible manner. The Government should, at any rate, set, as a parent, a good and not a bad example.

* Local Government Board Report, p. lxxix. C—5813.

† P. 279 of C—5813.

The grim principle of the 1834 Commissioners, that the pauper's "situation, on the whole, shall not be made really or apparently so eligible as the situation of the laborer of the lowest class," cannot, even by the blindest devotee of the now discredited *laissez-faire* principle which so misled the able authors of that remarkable report, be held to apply to orphan children whilst the situation of the children of the lowest laborer remains below the level of nurture and education at which they can be prepared for the struggle of life. To manufacture paupers wholesale inside the workhouse, merely because individual parents are doing so outside, has proved too stupid even for the scientific Poor Law pedant; and a vast improvement has taken place in the care of indoor pauper children.

Boarding out is still restricted, both by its limitation to orphan or deserted children, and by the difficulty of securing efficient supervision; but 3,778 were boarded out on July 1, 1888,* and, in the great majority of cases, were found to be well cared for.

The facilities for boarding out and emigration, now confined by the order of the Local Government Board to orphans and deserted children, might well be extended to other pauper children. It is even suggested by experienced Poor Law workers that the children of permanent indoor paupers might equally be boarded out, just as they are now sent away to the Poor Law School. The others, instead of being herded together in pauper barracks, or crowded in gigantic ophthalmic workhouse schools, as they are in all but a few exceptional institutions, need, if they cannot be boarded out, to be allotted in comparatively small parties in "cottage homes," to the care of "house-mothers." They should be kept free from any pauper taint; sent if possible to mix with other children in good public elementary schools; and carefully taught some trade or useful occupation, by which they can fulfil the duties of good citizenship, incumbent on them as on others. The apprenticeship of pauper children to unskilled trades, or the placing of them out as errand-boys or farm-laborers, ought to be definitely abandoned.

Their elementary education requires, too, considerable improvement. 16,216 children were in Metropolitan workhouse schools in 1886-7. Out of these only 359 were in Standard VI. (only 221 of these passed). The Poor Law inspectors are always deplored the inferiority of the Poor Law Schools.

It does not seem too much to ask that every child to which the State assumes the duties of parentage should be given, up to fourteen, the best elementary education possible, followed by apprenticeship to some highly skilled trade, so as to ensure that every workhouse child shall become a skilled instead of an, economically speaking, "unskilled" recruit in the labor market.

* P. 279 of C—5813.

V.—COLLECTIVE PROVISION FOR THE SICK.

Few persons realise how rapidly we are “municipalising” our hospitals. The workhouse infirmary is coming to be more and more accepted as the proper home of the wage-earners who are seriously ill. In London, where our magnificent voluntary hospitals, 78 in number, provide about 6,415 occupied beds, the 27 Poor Law infirmaries and “sick asylums” have 9,639, and the eight hospitals of the Metropolitan Asylums Board 1820, a total of 11,459. Nearly two-thirds of our Metropolitan hospital accommodation is therefore now provided from public funds.

Nothing could be more advantageous from the public point of view than that every case of serious illness should be treated in hospital. It is to the public interest that the worker should as quickly as possible recover his health and strength, with the least possible privation to his family. The great advance in medical treatment during recent years has been in nursing and in antiseptic treatment, neither of which is possible in a crowded home. The isolation of infectious disease is an obvious public gain. But when 80 per cent. of our households are those of manual wage-earners—when in our great cities 30 to 40 per cent. herd in single rooms, and as many more in two or three room-tenements, neither isolation nor proper nursing are possible in the home. The treatment of the sick must necessarily become more and more a matter of collective provision; and it is fortunate that the subjective demoralisation which we have done our best to attach to it by making (in London) two-thirds of the inmates technically paupers, is dying away before the common sense of the doctors and the patients. It was stated to the House of Lords’ Committee that, “in consequence of the excellence of the treatment in these infirmaries, and their separation from the workhouse, the poor are so ready to resort to them that there is a tendency to regard them as a kind of ‘State hospital,’ entrance to which does not imply that the patient is a pauper.”*

This excellent discrimination seems so horrible to the Birmingham Guardians that “they have determined to make all persons who come to their infirmary pass through the gate which leads to the workhouse grounds, so that they may not draw a distinction between the workhouse and the infirmary.”*

This sapping instance of the deliberate “pauperisation” of those free from this taint is characteristic of far too much of the existing Poor Law administration. We are often so intent on reducing the cost of the collective provision for our poorer brethren that we even prefer to make that provision as demoralising to them as we possibly can, on the chance that we may thereby exclude (to their detriment and occasional starvation) some of the more dignified among them.

* Report of House of Lords’ Committee on Poor Law Relief, H.L. 363, 1888, p. viii.

As regards medical aid, however, public opinion is now running too strongly to be resisted. By sec. 7 of the Diseases Prevention (Metropolis) Act, 1883, treatment in the magnificent public Hospitals of the Metropolitan Asylums Board is not deemed "parochial relief." In 1884 Parliament provided that the receipt merely of medical relief should not disqualify a man for exercising the franchise. In the next Parliamentary Registration Bill, a clause will inevitably be carried, which few members of Parliament will dare even to resist, defining "medical relief" to include treatment in a Poor Law Infirmary or Sick Asylum. Why, moreover, should we deprive a man of the rights of citizenship because he has had the misfortune to have his wife or child compulsorily removed from his care as dangerously insane, and remitted to a public lunatic asylum?*

The existing distinction between the voluntary and the rate-supported hospital cannot possibly be maintained; and it may be hoped that some order will soon be introduced into the barbaric chaos of London hospital administration. What appears to be wanted is the complete separation of medical and hospital relief from the Poor Law system. In large cities the provision for the sick needs classification according to the kind of disease, rather than according to the haphazard distinction of how each particular institution is maintained or administered. We require in London an elected Hospitals Board, managing all public provision for the sick and the insane, and auditing, supervising and controlling all "voluntary" hospitals. Such a Board would relieve the London County Council of its burdensome care of lunatic asylums, and take over the hospitals of the Metropolitan Asylums Board. In other counties it would probably be found sufficient to give similar powers of hospital management and control to the existing "Asylums Committee" of the County Council, thus removing all provision for the sick from any contact with Poor Law Administration.

VI.—PUBLIC BURIAL OF THE DEAD.

It is part of the imperfection of the existing Poor Law statistics that none exist as to the number of pauper funerals. The proportion of these to the total deaths must, however, be very large. Many persons are buried by the parish who were not in receipt of relief when alive. If 13 per cent. of the deaths in London are those of persons actually in the workhouse or Poor Law infirmary; if over 22 per cent. die in some public institution or another; if in the rural districts 30 to 40 per cent. of the deaths of persons over sixty are those of paupers; if 10 per cent. of the population obtain relief during any one year, and 20 per cent. of those over sixty-five are permanent paupers; it is probable that at least one-third of our funerals are already paid for from Poor Law funds.

To be "buried by the parish" is felt by the poor to be a disgrace and a dishonor to a greater extent that can easily be realised. The aged laborer, who will rely without shame on the parish doctor, use

* Nor is there any valid ground for depriving any other pauper of the rights of citizenship. (See Fabian Tract No. 14, "The New Reform Bill," clause 3.)

without disgrace the Poor Law dispensary or infirmary, and accept without dishonor the bitter bread of out-door relief, revolts against the pauper funeral, and starves himself to hoard the sum necessary to avoid this last humiliation. Yet so hard and so demoralising are the conditions of life of the great mass of the population, that it seems probable that at least one-third of them fail to maintain even this "final rally on the narrow ledge" of dignity and self-respect, and are eventually carried down to a pauper's grave.

There is, of course, nothing necessarily degrading in a public funeral. In the case of a soldier, a sailor, or a member of a religious order, the collective provision for burial is accepted as a matter of course. It is merely that we have deliberately chosen to make this particular form of public funeral—the lot of one-third of our brethren—an additional anxiety during their lives, a source of bitterness during their last moments, and a stain of disgrace to their relations. We have failed in our effort to abolish the public funeral, and have succeeded merely in making it one more pang to the dying, and one more engine of demoralisation to the living. Has not the time come for depauperising our parish funerals? We do not even take the trouble to make the burden easy to the poor. We charge unnecessary and irksome fees for the mere privilege of burial; we permit, in some cases, an absentee rector to levy a toll on all burials from his district, wherever and by whomsoever performed; we allow the provision of cemeteries to become, in many places, a matter of private speculation, and a source of unnecessary individual gain; and we leave the sorrowing household to bargain with a tradesman for the means of performing what is essentially a public duty. There seems no reason why the collective organisation of the people should not be utilised to minimise the trouble and expense of the burial of the dead.

In Paris the whole of the cemeteries are public property, and the funerals are conducted by what is virtually a public organisation. The one "undertaker" is the Company of "Pompes funèbres," chartered and subsidised by the municipality, and under its supervision and control. Funerals are provided according to a definite scale of charges, varying from nothing to the highest amount demanded by Parisian taste. It does not seem an impossible dream that we might one day "municipalise" our undertakers, expanding the existing "Burial Boards" into a complete municipal department for interments, the minimum charge being fixed low enough to enable even the very poorest to enjoy the luxury of paying something for the last offices to the loved dead.

But we shall one day go a step further. The expenses of burial must necessarily be shared among the living; and Death knocks at the door of every household, on an average, once in ten years. Why should we add to the trouble and economic disturbance necessarily incident to death by levying a toll on burial? The disposal of the dead is a matter of common concern; the fulfilment of this public duty presses crushing-ly on the poor in their hour of greatest need; "communism in funerals" is not likely to lead to reckless increase in the demand for graves; and any simplification of the expenses now incurred would be a great boon.

VII.—ABOLITION OF THE CASUAL WARD.

For the first 200 years of its history—indeed, during the whole era of the middle ages—Poor Law legislation aimed almost exclusively at repression, not relief; and we must, to-day, not forget the necessity of undertaking the reformation of sturdy rogues and vagabonds.

Many otherwise sensible people have a most immoral belief that all paupers belong to this class. They forget that one-third of the paupers are children, one-tenth insane, and one-half infirm, aged, or disabled adults. Less than one-tenth are classed as able-bodied adults; and of these three-fourths are women, mostly deserted or widowed mothers, with families demanding all their strength. Only 3 per cent. are classed as usually adult able-bodied males; and even as to these the Local Government Board explains (p. 278 of C. 5813) that they include “those relieved (1) on account of sudden and urgent necessity; (2) on account of their own sickness, accident, or infirmity; (3) on account of the sickness, accident, or infirmity of some member of the family, or through a funeral; and (4) on account of want of work.” The number of vagrants relieved is only about 6000; and the total number of “sturdy beggars” profiting by the Poor Law must be but a trifling proportion of the population. Nevertheless vagabonds exist in demoralising numbers, moving gaily from one “Queen’s Mansion” to another, until their faces become perfectly well-known to the superintendent.

The existing casual wards appear, indeed, to be permanent foci of moral infection. Filled almost exclusively by habitual tramps, they serve at present merely to deprave their inmates. The few innocent persons who drift into them from sheer lack of shelter are almost inevitably drawn into the eddy of the evil current, and become permanent casuals. The only reform that can be suggested is total refusal to recognise or provide for the “poor traveller,” now become obsolete; the admission to a “Reception Ward” of any destitute person, and his searching individual examination there; the stern and rigorous commitment to a penal “labor colony” of every recognised habitual casual; and the prompt discharge, after humane succor and performance of a reasonable task of useful labor, of the merely destitute laborer, who should be in every possible way assisted to obtain employment. We might certainly take as much trouble to save human lives from the shipwreck of permanent pauperism as we do to prevent the loss of ships and cargoes on our coasts.

For the chronic cases of sturdy vagrancy, idle mendicity and incorrigible laziness, we must have recourse to organised pauper labor, strictly disciplined and severely supervised. These classes, like the criminals, are the “failures” of our civilisation; and whilst they must be treated with all just kindness, and offered opportunities earning their subsistence, they must nevertheless be sternly denied all relief until they are willing to repay it by useful labor. The present Poor Law system fails to deal with them; and all reformers demand further public action. Mr. Charles Booth urges* that we must “open a little the portals of the Poor Law, or its administra-

* “Life and Labor in East London,” p. 168.

tion, making within its courts a working guild under suitable discipline," and eliminate the idle loafers from society by making their existence in the ordinary community more and more impossible, whilst we, on the other hand, offer them constantly the alternative of the reforming "labor colony" to which all incorrigible vagrants and beggars could be committed by the magistrate for specified terms on the indictment of the police or Poor Law officer.

VIII.—REFORM OF POOR LAW MACHINERY.

No Poor Law administration will, however, be stable until its members enjoy the confidence of the public, now effectually destroyed by the defective manner of their election. The reform of the administrative machinery of the Poor Law is therefore a matter of vital importance, especially in the metropolis. Indeed, it is probable that this side of the problem will force itself upon the notice of Ministers long before they can be induced to deal with the equally urgent reforms already referred to.

The administration of the Poor Law is, in England and Wales, committed to 647 boards of guardians, acting for 647 aggregations of 14,827 parishes. In London there are 30 boards of guardians acting either for separate parishes (14) or for "unions" (16) of smaller parishes. The "overseers of the poor," appointed by two J.P.'s, have become practically obsolete as to function.

The boards of guardians are mainly elected by the ratepayers (either annually or triennially in the month of April, according to the particular arrangement in force for each parish) upon a system of plural voting, each elector having from one to six votes, according to the rateable value of his house. Owners are entitled to vote as well as occupiers, and may even vote by proxy; and an occupying owner can give double votes. If, moreover, he is rated for more than one house, whether as a "house-farmer" or not, his voting power is further multiplied in proportion to the number of his houses. Under this system it occasionally happens (as in Bethnal Green in April, 1889) that a minority of the large householders prevails over the poorer majority.

The elections are conducted carelessly, voting papers being left at each house by a policeman, and collected next day, without any safeguards against personation or fraud. Very little public interest is aroused; and only a small proportion of the papers are filled up.

Justices of the Peace in any parish are *ex-officio* members of its board of guardians; but they seldom attend. The Local Government Board may nominate additional members of any board. The bulk of the work is left in the hands of the paid officials; and the "clerk to the guardians"—frequently a local solicitor—is often an official pluralist (as in Chelsea) receiving huge emoluments, and practically beyond control.

We need in our Poor Law representative government, "one man one vote" on the County Council register, uniform triennial elections, exclusion of all J.P.'s and other nominated members, abolition of rating qualification, payment of members for each day's attendance, election arrangements under the Corrupt Practices Act

on the lines of those for the School Boards (but allowing, as now for Parliamentary elections, though not for municipal elections, meetings, &c., in working men's clubs), and removal of the alleged disability of married women to be guardians or electors of guardians.

Each board of guardians now administers relief, and collects its rates independently of the others; but in London the cost of the maintenance of the poor inside the workhouses, infirmaries and schools, the salaries of Poor Law officials, and the expenses of vaccination, are defrayed from a "Common Poor Fund," and divided amongst the parishes in proportion to the rateable value of their property. This principle needs to be further extended. But any complete equalisation of the London poor-rate requires an efficient central authority; and the metropolis sadly needs a central "Board of Guardians" to ensure the extinction of the demoralising inequality of treatment which thirty separate administrative boards in one city can never fail to produce. Unity of administration would make possible, not only much stricter classification and educational discrimination, but also a relaxation in the treatment of the aged and the worthy, along with the needful discipline in separate establishments for the wilfully idle. The financial economy of amalgamation, in space, in time, and in money, need only be mentioned.

No reformer would, however, for a moment propose to add any functions or powers to London's only central Poor Law organisation, the Metropolitan Asylums Board. London needs a single Poor Law Council, which, like its County Council and School Board, must spring exclusively from the direct election of the people. The Poor Law Council should retain for itself all power of deciding the principles of administration and of poor relief, delegating nothing to local boards of "district almoners" but the duty of administering and granting relief upon those principles. It would naturally take over all the powers, duties, and property of the Metropolitan Asylums Board, and the administration of all workhouses, casual wards, and Poor Law schools. The London Poor Law Council should be placed as nearly as may be practicable in the same position as regards independence of the Local Government Board as the London County Council and School Board.

Outside the Metropolis it appears unnecessary to make any immediate alteration of Poor Law machinery or change in Poor Law areas. The existing 647 Poor Law Unions cannot be disturbed without the most serious readjustments of property, debts, officers, rates, and official machinery. No one would propose to transfer them to the County Councils, which are quite unfitted for the detailed examination of individual cases which should form the leading feature in Poor Law administration. It will probably be found that "district" as distinct from "parish" councils are needed only in London, where they will replace the existing vestries and district boards of works. In a few of the larger counties an authority intermediate between the parish and the shire may be called for; but this can best be supplied by local committees of the county council, empowered to administer local affairs on the lines laid down by the whole council. Even in

these cases the Poor Law Union could not be adopted as the area, because it is desirable that the areas of the local committees should be, as far as possible, homogeneous in character, with special separation of urban from purely rural districts. Now most of the Poor Law Unions were deliberately formed so as to unite urban with rural districts, in order somewhat to equalise the rates, and distribute any special pressure. They often cut across municipal boundaries and unite the most diverse districts. Thus, the Barton Regis Union includes Clifton and other suburbs of Bristol, with a large slice of purely agricultural country. Leeds is in three Poor Law Unions, each containing a huge cantle of the neighbouring rural area. The omission of the Poor Law administration from the Local Government Act was an inevitable necessity of the incongruity of the union areas with those of any possible arrangement of district councils.

Nor can Poor Law administration be made wholly parochial. The 14,827 parishes in England and Wales cannot possibly each have its workhouse, its infirmary, its lunatic asylum, its casual ward, and its labor yard. The parish council may well be empowered to remit cases to the appropriate union institution, and possibly act as a local consultative committee to the board of guardians of the union, and to the public authority administering the aged pensions; but further than this no experienced Poor Law worker would desire to go. To allow the parish council to grant out-door relief would promptly land us in all the demoralising horrors of the Old Poor Law; and to make each parish maintain its own poor would bring back all the absurdities of the old Law of Settlement, with the inevitable results of "closed parishes," demolition of cottages, compulsory removals, litigation, inter-parochial envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. We must therefore retain, outside London, the Poor Law union with its board of guardians, reformed as to election, the members paid for each day's attendance as well as reimbursed their reasonable travelling expenses. They should be relieved of their present medley of sanitary and educational functions, and thus set free to devote themselves entirely to their task of worthily administering the collective provision for the poorer citizens.

IX.—CONCLUSION.

The foregoing tentative proposals for Poor Law reform all proceed, it will be seen, on the lines of "depauperising" the present collective provision of the community for its weaker members, and of "democratising" the machinery of its administration. They do not form a complete scheme; for they deal neither with the "unemployed" nor with the constant Poor Law problem of the widow with young children. To those far-sighted reformers who see that we shall not always have the poor with us, they are offered as provisional measures kept carefully upon progressive lines. No attempt is made to do more than to suggest immediately practicable reform, of which nothing but popular apathy delays the execution.

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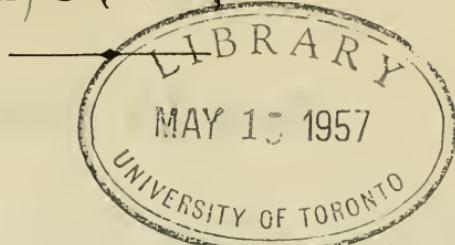
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Facts for Bristol.

BRISTOL is in many respects the most backward of English municipalities. Most important towns in England own their own waterworks: Bristol leaves this vital public service in the hands of a monopolist company earning a dividend of eight and a half per cent. Two-thirds of the gas-consumers in the United Kingdom are supplied by municipal enterprise: Bristol depends for light on a company earning ten per cent. More than a quarter of the tramways in this country are owned by public authorities: Bristol allows private adventurers to earn five per cent. by running cars through the public streets. Birmingham, Manchester, Bradford, and many other places keep all three of these public services under public control for public profit. Bristol enjoys the bad pre-eminence of being the largest provincial municipality which allows all three to remain in private hands for private advantage. Bristol can borrow capital at three and a half per cent.: if the capital of these companies had been municipal stock at three and a half per cent. instead of private investments at an average of six per cent., the inhabitants of Bristol would be saving £50,000 per annum, representing a rate of one shilling in the pound.

Public administration in Bristol is a confused and perplexing tangle of uncoordinated authorities, exercising diverse and ill-defined powers over varying and over-lapping areas, elected on different franchises, at different dates, with different qualifications for membership. One public body spends money in opposing the projects of another. The poor rate varies from street to street within what is virtually one town. During three years, 1881-4, no fewer than 16 elections to one public body or another have taken place at a cost of about £3,000. Lack of public spirit, due largely to lack of knowledge of public affairs, is the inevitable result of this confusion.

Municipal reformers everywhere find their great difficulty in the want of accurate statistics and easily accessible facts dealing with local life. In the following pages an attempt is made to supply this want as far as Bristol is concerned, and to suggest some of the immediately practicable reforms in the local administration, which Socialists desire to press on the attention of the public.*

BRISTOL'S SIZE AND GROWTH.

The area within the parliamentary boundaries of Bristol, as extended under the Redistribution of Seats Act, 1885, measures about five miles in extreme length, east and west, from Fishponds to the river Avon, and about four miles in extreme breadth (north and south), from Stapleton to Bedminster, and comprises 10,875 acres.

* Further statistics will be found in "Facts for Socialists" (Fabian Tract No. 5).

The total population living within these limits will not fall very much below 300,000 when the census of 1891 is taken. In 1881 the numbers occupying this area, divided in 1885 into the present four constituencies, were 253,906 (North Division 64,713; West Division 60,874; East Division 61,986; South Division 66,333); of this total 206,874 lived within the municipal boundaries of the City and County of Bristol, the remainder (47,032) being made up by the local government districts of Horfield (4,766); St. George (26,433); Stapleton (10,833); and an extra part of Bedminster (5,000).*

Before 1885 the parliamentary boundaries coincided with those of the municipality, which embrace 4,632 acres, with a circuit of 15 miles. Three-fourths of the municipal area lies in Gloucestershire; the remaining fourth, Bedminster, is in Somerset, and contains about a fifth of the population. In 1881, the municipal area had 32,061 inhabited houses, containing 206,874 persons, 4,632 acres, 45·5 to the acre, 32,120 to the square mile, 6·4 to each house, (Census Report, C. 3563). The population was estimated by the Medical Officer of Health to have increased to 232,248, up to the middle of 1890 (see his report for 1890). The figures of population are given in the following table (see Encycl. Britannica, vol. iv.):—

BRISTOL MUNICIPALITY.

Year.	Ancient City.	Added Districts.	Total.
1801	40,814	20,339	61,153
1821	52,889	32,219	85,108
1841	64,266	60,880	125,146
1851	65,716	71,612	137,328
1861	66,027	88,066	154,093
1871	62,662	119,890	182,552
1881	57,479	149,395	206,874
1890 (estimated)	53,656	178,592	232,248

Bristol formerly returned two members to Parliament, but since 1885 it has been divided into four constituencies as follows:—

	1886.	1891.	
Bristol West	... 7,657	... 7,922	registered electors.
Bristol North	... 9,002	... 10,533	" "
Bristol East	... 9,506	... 10,593	" "
Bristol South	... 10,384	... 11,752	" "
Total	... 36,549	... 40,800	

(Parl. Paper, H.C. No. 47 of 1886, and *Western Daily Press*, Jan. , 1891.)

As the percentage of men over 21 out of the total population is normally 22 per cent. (Census Return of 1881, C. 3797, p. 85), it may be assumed (taking an estimated population of 300,000), that there are about 65,000 adult males in Bristol. Therefore more than a third of the men of Bristol have no votes.† At the general election in 1885, when all the seats were contested, only 28,863 electors voted; and at the general election of 1886, only 25,422, about two-thirds of those on the register, and less than half of the number of adult males who would have been entitled to the vote under manhood suffrage.

* Kelly's Directory for Bristol (51, Great Queen Street, London, 1885).

† "The New Reform Bill" (Fabian Tract No. 14) supplies detailed proposals in exact Parliamentary terms for the reform of this anomaly.

THE POOR OF BRISTOL.

Bristol contains about 50,000 families. How many of these are able to maintain a decent existence, and how many are in poverty? It may be assumed that in Bristol, as elsewhere, four out of five of the adult males are manual laborers for weekly wages (Prof. Leone-Levi, *Times*, 13th January, 1885). The Medical Officer of Health's for 1889 shows that 16·7 per cent. of the deaths in Bristol in 1889 took place in the workhouses, hospitals, and public lunatic asylums. As the inmates of these institutions are almost entirely drawn from the wage-earning class, and include an unusually large proportion of adults, it is practically certain that one in three of the wage-earners ends his or her life in a bed provided by public charity. Over a third, indeed, of these deaths were those of indoor paupers in the three workhouses.

Three public authorities are responsible for the relief of the Bristol poor, viz.:—the Bristol Incorporation of the Poor, the Barton Regis Union (which includes the parishes of Clifton, SS. Philip and Jacob (without), St. James and St. Paul (without), and part of Westbury on-Trym, all situated in the City and County of Bristol, besides eight other parishes in the County of Gloucester), and the Bedminster Union (comprising 22 parishes in the County of Somerset, Bedminster being one, and the City portion of it forming its most populous and important fraction).

The following are the latest statistics of their work:—

	Population, Middle of 1889.	Persons per acre, 1883.	Panpers relieved on Jan. 1, 1890.	Beds in Sick and Infectious Hospitals.	Total Cost of Relief, 1889-90.
Bristol Incorporation	53,972	71·5	2,970	228	30,547
Barton Regis Union			5,026	300	
" city part..."	128,815	46·1	3,204	192	29,656
Bedminster Union ...			2,894	140	
" city part..."	46,574	46·9	1,845	90	15,441
Bristol Municipal Area	229,361	49·5	8,019	510	75,644

See Accounts of Poor Law Authorities, and Report of Medical Officer of Health for 1889, p. 54.

The total number of separate individuals who receive parochial relief during any one year is usually assumed to be at least three times* the number receiving relief on any one day. The number of persons in these Unions who were paupers at some time during 1889-90 was therefore about $3 \times 8,019 = 24,057$, or 10 per cent. of the population, being one in eight of the wage-earning class. †

THE HOUSING OF THE PEOPLE.

Though the Bristol Committee's Report† in 1884 states that: "there is not much overcrowding" (p. 33), according to the returns of the Medical Officer of Health, the people of Bristol are crowded

* Dudley Baxter gave $3\frac{1}{2}$ as the more probable figure ("National Income," p. 87); Mulhall's "Dictionary of Statistics" gives 3 (p. 346).

† For a statement of the reforms in Poor Law administration most pressingly required see Fabian Tract, No. 8, "Facts for Londoners," p. 18; No. 17, "The Reform of the Poor Law"; and No. 20, "Questions for Poor Law Guardians."

‡ Report of Committee appointed to Inquire into the Condition of the Bristol Poor (P. S. King and Son, King Street, Westminster, 1885), pp. 35, 47. See also p. 10 of Report of Medical Officer of Health, 1889.

together more closely than the inhabitants of any of the 27 largest provincial towns in the United Kingdom, with the exception of Liverpool, Birmingham and Plymouth. Bristol's average of 50 persons to the acre is more than double that of Wolverhampton, Bradford, Nottingham or Blackburn, and treble that of Cardiff, Sheffield, Huddersfield or Leeds.

In the City proper the density in 1889 was 71·5, and for the whole of Bristol the average has risen from 45·5 in 1881 to 49·5 in 1889. Thousands of Bristol families are huddled together in the 600 courts, and the very large number of houses without any back-let* which are mostly unfit for human habitation. The houses in the courts are densely crowded, there being an average of 4 persons to each room.* Many other houses built for one family only are now let out in tenements, and are seriously deficient in closet and window accommodation.

Notwithstanding these facts no action has been taken by the Town Council under the Artisans' Dwellings Acts to provide decent accommodation for the poorer citizens.† Other municipalities have been less backward in this respect.

In Liverpool the Corporation has cleared upwards of four acres, and itself erected five blocks of dwellings containing 322 tenements, and housing 1,300 persons at a cost for land and buildings of £130,816: 5,230 square yards remain still unbuilt.‡ In Greenock an area of about $3\frac{1}{2}$ acres was cleared in 1879-81, and the local authority itself erected 197 tenements with the best sanitary arrangements, accommodating 890 persons.‡ Glasgow has erected a block of tenement houses at a cost of £3,426, and the Dublin Corporation has built 226 tenements. In London, too, a small beginning has been made by the City Corporation, in building blocks in Farringdon Street (£1,716 received as rent in 1886-7 for 150 rooms), and in Petticoat Lane (240 tenements let in April, 1888, and 923 persons in occupation).

At least a thousand of Bristol's citizens have no better home than the common lodging houses, of which there are 54 registered, with 1,128 beds.|| The Town Council has so far made no attempt to provide decent accommodation for this class—the least able to provide homes for themselves. The Glasgow Corporation maintains no fewer than seven common lodging houses (six for men and one for women), which are most admirably managed. The rooms are clean, and in each house there is a comfortable recreation room in which lectures are delivered, and music is produced by a "harmoniumist" whose salary appears regularly among the expenses. The inmates have ample opportunity for cooking their food and drying their clothes, while cheese, candles, sugar, tea, etc., are sold to them by the Corporation at wholesale prices. From May 1887 to May

* See Report of Committee on Bristol Poor, quoted on p. 4.

† The Medical Officer of Health (see his evidence before the Royal Commission for the Housing of the Working Classes, C. 4402, i., p. 223) has held that as their death-rate was not specially high, areas could not be condemned as unhealthy, and the enforcement of the tenement regulations has been used by him as a threat to compel voluntary improvement.

‡ House of Lords Return, 1888, No. 275, 3½d.

|| Report of Medical Officer of Health, 1889, p. 32.

1888, 637,581 beds were let to men, and 33,986 to women, at 4½d., 3½d., and (in the women's lodging house) 3d. per night. The net revenue from all seven was £3,999, representing 4½ per cent. on their cost.*

Probably not less than 10,000 families ought to be rehoused in Bristol, and allowing the minimum of two rooms per family, 20,000 new rooms would be required, which could be erected at a cost of (say) £50 a room; the cost of the sites would be comparatively small, as the Corporation owns so much property in the city which it could utilise for the purpose. A rent of 2s. a week for two rooms would produce £5 4s. a year, so that supposing the money were borrowed by the city at 3½ per cent., the scheme could not involve a large deficiency, if any, allowing for possible increased cost of building, losses and expenses of management. The rents would not be above the ordinary rate now fixed by competition, which at present is said to be 1s. to 3s. 6d. for single rooms, and 2s. to 4s. 6d. for two rooms,† for much inferior buildings. Any deficiency would properly be met out of the landlords' and not out of the ratepayers' pockets, by an addition to the landlords' income tax.‡

BRISTOL'S ANNUAL RENTAL.

No authoritative statistics are available as to the price which the people of Bristol pay for the privilege of living in their city. It may, however, be computed from the assessment of property to the poor rate, which is as follows:—

	Rateable Value, March, 1899.	Gross Estimated Rental Value.
The City proper ...	£383,862	£458,622
Clifton ...	197,458	236,949
SS. Philip and Jacob ...	136,401	163,681
St. James and St. Paul ...	79,526	95,431
Westbury (city part) ...	101,093	121,311
Bedminster Union (city part) ...	113,128	135,625*
Total ...	£1,011,468	£1,211,619

* One-fifth has been added to the rateable value, the proportion given in the return of the Bristol Incorporation of the Poor for the city proper.

Therefore it may be computed that the owners of the land and houses of Bristol enjoy an annual rental of about £1,250,000, or more than £25 per annum from each Bristol family.

In London it is estimated that two-fifths of the gross rental represents the annual value of the bare site or "ground-rent."* If the same proportion held good in Bristol, the amount annually paid for the use of that narrow area of hill and marsh, beside the Frome and the Avon, which countless generations of toilers have made so productive, would be about £500,000 per annum,|| the other £750,000 representing the annual value of the buildings. But probably the value of the buildings in Bristol bears a higher proportion.

* Statement of the Trustees under the Glasgow Improvements Act, 1866, for the year 1887-8; and see Fabian Tract No. 8, "Facts for Londoners."

† P. 35 of Report of Committee of Inquiry into Bristol Poor.

‡ See proposals in Report of Housing Conference, 1890. (J. T. Dodd, Hon. Sec., 20 Old Buildings, Lincoln's Inn.)

|| See "Facts for Londoners" (Fabian Tract, No. 8) p. 11.

This shows an enormous growth of value in the present generation, during which the population has grown by more than a third. It is impossible, of course, to distinguish precisely between the increase due to the new buildings, and that arising from enhanced ground-value. But the city proper has long been entirely covered with buildings, and although some of these have been rebuilt, the steady rise in its annual assessment during the last twenty years, records mainly the growth of "unearned increment." In 1870 the rateable value of the district was £256,529, as compared with £383,862 in 1890, an increase of £127,333, or fifty per cent. in twenty years. At fifteen years purchase, this new annual rental value represents a capital sum of nearly £2,000,000, a very large proportion of which must be pure unearned increment, and therefore virtually a gratuitous present from the people of Bristol to the proprietors of their homes.

BRISTOL'S LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

The municipal government of Bristol is centred in the Town Council, which also acts and levies rates as the sanitary authority, but there are, in all, eight public authorities of various kinds. (1) The Town Council and (2) the School Board have jurisdiction over the whole of the city. There are three Poor-Law authorities (the Board of Guardians for the city proper (3), 18 parishes: the Barton Regis Union (4), 5 parishes: and the Bedminster Union (5), responsible for the city portion of Bedminster). These spend rates assessed by the overseers of the parishes. The overseers also assess and hand over to the Town Council and the School Board, the Borough and Dock rates. The other separate authorities within the city are (6) the overseers of St. Philip and St. Jacob, (7) the St. Philip's Burials Board, composed of nine members of St. Philip's Vestry acting as a Burials Board, and (8) the administrative authority of the united parishes (called the district) of St. James and St. Paul. The times and method of election, and the qualifications of candidates for these bodies, are in almost in each case different, and it is obvious that under such conditions, there must be waste of power, of money, and lack of interest and of harmony, and an unnecessary multiplication of officials. At present there are some 180 elected members of the various governing bodies, and with *ex officio* members, about 250 in all. The facts have been brought out clearly by Mr. F. Gilmore Barnett, in his pamphlet "The Bristol Town Council as it is, and as it ought to be" (published by W. Bennett, John Street, Bristol, 1884, 1/-); and his contention is that the whole civic budget should be brought forward and discussed in its entirety, with a full sense of responsibility, before a single representative body, elected by the people, upon broad and well-understood issues. The table on page 10 is taken from the pamphlet.

BRISTOL'S ANNUAL BUDGET.

The financial arrangement of Bristol's multifarious public bodies are as complicated as their respective powers and functions. The Town Council, as a Corporation, does not levy any rate, but the General District Rate, over the whole municipal area, is made and

collected by the Town Council acting as the Sanitary Authority. The highest total rate paid in any parish in the municipality is 5s. 10d. in the £, the lowest 5s. 3d. The statistics in the table on page 10 show the rates levied within the several districts.

The balance-sheet on page 9 shows that the annual expenditure of the city is equal to about one half of the annual rental of the city. The first reform needed to render a unified budget possible is that the Docks Committee and the School Board should make their financial year square with that adopted by the Town Council and the Poor Law authorities.

PUBLIC DEBT.

MARCH, 1890.

£

Debt in respect of Docks Estate	...	...	...	...	...	...	1,875,022
Corporation Debt on various Accounts	...	...	...	...	...	...	132,778
" " under Portishead Dock Act, 1871	...	...	...	...	...	...	89,920
Urban Sanitary Authority's Debt	...	...	...	...	...	...	417,981
School Board Debt (September, 1890)	...	...	...	...	...	...	102,577
							£2,618,278

(See City Treasurer's Statement and School Board Year Book, 1891.)

In December, 1883, it amounted to £1,358,513 (exclusive of the School Board debt), the great increase since then being on the Docks Account. (See Mr. Barnett's pamphlet.)

The aggregate indebtedness of the various public authorities of Bristol amounts therefore, to about £2,600,000, or almost exactly two years rental. The Bristolians pay every two years to the proprietors of their city, for the mere privilege of inhabiting it, as much as the whole outstanding cost of the docks, schools, public buildings, and street improvements.

In spite of the large Dock debt, the aggregate Bristol debt, which is 2·6 times the annual rateable value, is not higher than the average of the 58 English municipalities having municipal stock (2·65 times the annual rateable value*). This is partly due to its continued abandonment to private adventurers of its water supply, gas works and tramways, for which the inhabitants are none the less "in debt," and pay an annual tribute. Deducting the Dock debt, Bristol owes only 0·65 times its annual rateable value, as compared with an average indebtedness for unproductive public services of 1·12 times the annual rateable value. It is impossible to avoid the suggestion that the Bristol authorities have been less active than those of other municipalities in those departments of collective expenditure such as public sanitation, the re-housing of the people, and the common provision for the needs of crowded urban life, which, though not pecuniarily remunerative, are of such inestimable public advantage.

* See *Financial Reform Almanack*, 1891, p. 13.

BRISTOL'S BUDGET.

PUBLIC REVENUE. (LADY-DAY, 1889, TO LADY-DAY, 1890), PUBLIC EXPENDITURE.

TOWN COUNCIL—CITY TREASURER'S ACCOUNT.		£	£
Borough Rate (including Libraries Rate)	...	...	8,000
Rents of City Property	...	...	26,500
Town, Wharfage, and Mayor's Dues, etc.	...	...	21,500
Local Government Board Grant to Town Council	...	...	23,616
Police Court Fees, Fines, etc.	...	...	4,160
Frome Floods Loan	...	...	35,000
TOWN COUNCIL—SANITARY AUTHORITY'S ACCOUNT.			
General District Rate	...	...	148,067
Sanitary Authority's Receipts (Rents, Sale of Surplus Lands and Materials, and Receipts from Baths and Wash-houses)	13,500		
Avon Intercepting Sewers Rate...	...	...	2,392
* TOWN COUNCIL—DOCKS ACCOUNT (YEAR ENDING 30TH APRIL, 1890).			
Dock Receipts	...	...	141,416
Borough Dock (£18,000) and Harbor (£2,360) Rates	...	20,360	
SCHOOL BOARD (YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER, 1890).			
Education Department Grant	...	...	9,390
School Fees (£3,418) and other receipts	...	...	5,266
Loans raised	...	...	12,739
School Board Rate (at 7d. in the £)	...	...	27,500
POOR LAW (BRISTOL INCORPORATION, BARTON REGIS UNION AND BEDMINSTER UNION ACCOUNTS).			
Poor Rate	...	...	45,000
Local Government Board Grant	...	...	16,550
Parliamentary Grant in Aid received from Town Council	...	...	13,434
Relief Repaid	...	...	3,000
General Total Revenue	...	...	£567,390
			<u>£609,878</u>

* The Docks Account is almost balanced by the net amount received from Town, Wharfage, and Mayor's Dues in the Town Council Account. These Dues with the expenditure per contra are excluded in this Balance Sheet from the Docks Account.

† This includes an unusual sum, £12,000, expended in purchasing property in the city.

‡ This Grant in Aid is now replaced by a share of the Probate Duty and Local Licences. The Parliamentary Grant in the Poor Law Account has been eliminated from both sides of the City Treasurer's Account.

	Population, 1881.	Inhab- ited houses, 1881.	Area in acres.	Year ending Lady-Day, 1890.					Sanitary Rate, per £
				Poor Rate, per £	Boro' Rate, per £	School Rate, per £	Boro' Dock Rate, per £	Total Receipts approx. £	
Bristol City proper ...	57,479	8,529	755	1/0½	2½d.	6½d.	6½d.*	42,000	3/3†
Clifton	28,695	3,698	915	10d.	1½d.	6½d.	6d.	19,500	"
SS. Philip and Jacob.	50,108	8,260	765	1/0½	1½d.	6d.	4½d.	13,500	"
St. James & St. Paul .	19,114	2,938	457	11d.	2d.	6½d.	4½d.	7,360	"
Westbury	13,347	2,111	703	11d.	2½d.	6½d.	4d.	9,000	"
Bedminster	38,131	6,525	1,037	1/4	2d.	6d.	4d.	13,000	"
Bristol Municipal Area	206,874	32,061	4,632	51,000	8,000	25,000	20,360	104,360	£148,067

See C. 3563, pp. 285, 321, 353, 354. The area in local returns is given as 4,971 acres: the figures for Westbury and Bedminster being 653 and 1,426 respectively. Bristol Urban Sanitary District has 4,538 acres (Ordnance Survey).

* This includes the Harbor Rate (2d. in the £) levied only upon the city proper, and yielding £2,360 (net).

† N.B.—An additional rate of 2d. in the £ (Avon Intercepting Sewers Rate) is levied by the Sanitary Authority over a portion of the city, realising £2,392.

Authorities within the City.	Date of Election.	Tenure of Office.	Method of Election.	Elected members.	Ex-officio members.
1) Town Council	November 1st	3 years, 1-3rd retiring each year.	Ballot, occupiers one vote.	48 (16 aldermen)	
2) School Board	Any time of year.	3 years, all retiring together.	Ballot, one vote (cumulative).	15	None
3) Bristol Board of Guardians	1st Thursday in April.	4 years, half retiring every two years.	Open voting in vestries, male occupiers one vote.	48	31
4) Barton Regis Board of Guardians	April 7, 8, 9.	One year.	* Voting paper left at house and collected.	18	51
5) Bedminster Board of Guardians	April 7, 8, 9.	One year.	* Voting paper left at house and collected.	8	6
6) St. Philip's Vestry, Overseers	Easter Mond.	3 years, 1-3rd retiring each year.	* Open voting in vestries.	—	—
7) St. Philip's Vestry, Burial Board	About 1st Thu. after Sept. 3.	3 years, 1-3rd retiring each year.	* Open voting in vestries.	9	None
8) Commissioners (18) of District of St. James and St. Paul	20 days before 3rd Monday in Sept.	3 years, six retiring each year.	Public meeting, occupiers one vote; candid'ts must be rated at £40.	18	None

* The scale of voting for Barton Regis and Bedminster Boards of Guardians is one vote to six, up to £250. For owners and occupiers; persons can vote in both capacities; candidates must be rated at £30. For St. Philip's Overseers and Burial Board, occupiers have one vote under £50 and one vote for every £25, but not more than six votes. Candidates must be resident ratepayers.

THE PUBLIC ESTATE.

As a set-off against its collective debt, Bristol enjoys not only the possession of its docks, schools, public offices, markets, and the result of its sanitary and other improvements, but also a share of the rental. The complete Schedule of the Property of the Corporation, issued in September, 1888, shows that their property in the city yields ground rents, £324, the terms or tenancies mostly dating from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; rents of premises let on leases for lives, £220; annual rents of premises let on leases for 40 years, renewable at the expiration of the first 14 years, £330, the total amount of the fines (one year's rack-rent) paid at the last renewals being £8,808; annual rents of premises let for terms of years not renewable, the terms being almost always 75 years, £6,245; annual rents of premises let on yearly tenancies, £10,540. Besides this, the Exchange and St. Nicholas markets (rents of stalls and standings) produce £2,700; the Corn Market (rent of stands) £490; St. James' Market (tolls and rents), £400. The Corporation also owns Durdham Down, comprising about 212 acres, the greater part of which lies just outside the municipal boundary, in addition to certain country property in the adjoining counties of Gloucester and Somerset. The Down yields no revenue, but is a most valuable open space, the Corporation being required by the Clifton and Durdham Downs (Bristol) Act, 1861, to keep it open and unenclosed as a place of public resort and recreation. Most of the Corporation property is let at very low ground rents, much below the present ground value. Care should be taken that the full economic rent is exacted in each case of new letting, whatever the form of lease may be.

Besides the receipts from Corporation property (gross receipts for 1889-90, £26,500; net receipts, £21,000), the property of the Sanitary authority yielded £1,852, that of the Municipal Charities £7,500 (about) for the same year. To this extent therefore, the land is already "municipalised," and its rental duly applied for the benefit of the community, instead of to the gratuitous maintenance of individual landlords.

BRISTOL'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

About two-thirds of Bristol's children attend schools over which the citizens have no control: out of 73 elementary schools, only 19 are administered by the Bristol School Board, 54 being under the management of various religious bodies. The statistics are as follows (the figures are partly found in the Parliamentary Blue Book, C. 6079, the rest having been supplied by the Bristol School Board):

October, 1889	School Places	Numbers on Register	Average Attendance	Income per Scholar, August 1889.				Expenditure per Scholar
				Scholar pence	Subscriptions	Grant	Rates	
Board Schools	11,813	12,885	10,207	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	£ s. d.
Denominal ,,	25,285	22,961	18,012	6 5 $\frac{1}{2}$	—	17 10	21 10 $\frac{1}{4}$	2 4 7
Total	37,098	35,846	28,219	11 6 $\frac{3}{4}$	4 4 $\frac{1}{2}$	16 11 $\frac{1}{4}$	—	1 15 3
				The total expenditure of the School Board in 1889-90 was £48,792, the rate in the £ being 7d.				

The School Board is not specially efficient, and unfortunately cannot extend either its energy or its advantages to three-fourths of the schools in which the next generation of Bristolians are being educated. Fourteen schools have been built by the Board since its formation up to October 1890, at a total cost of £116,000 (cost of land, £26,000; cost of building, etc., £90,000), of which £113,528 was raised by loan. The debt of the Board at the end of September 1890 was £102,577 (loans from Public Works Loan Commissioners outstanding, £49,722; other loans outstanding, £52,855). Bristol stands well, so far as its School Board is concerned, with respect to its Day Industrial Feeding School (established by the late Mary Carpenter), which feeds and educates 210 poor children; its two Swimming Baths for Board School children, with swimming instructors; its pianos in the larger schools; and its provision of special instructors for pupil-teachers, as well as of classes for deaf and dumb and blind children. The denominational schools, which charge a higher fee, have fewer advantages, and yet receive in school-pence twice the amount which the School Board receives per scholar.

On the other hand, Bristol compares badly with other cities with respect to the number of children at school. The numbers on the register and the average attendance remain almost stationary, and the proportion which the latter figure bears to the total population (12·2 per cent.) is much below the corresponding figures for Bromsgrove (17·1), Frome (14·5), Keynsham (15·0).—(C. 6079, I., p. 279.) The Education Department Report says (C. 6079, p. 8) that school seats should be provided for one-sixth of the population, and that these seats ought to be daily occupied.

The statistics of Evening Schools shew the need for compulsory Continuation Classes. About 4,500 children leave school in Bristol every year, and nearly all of these ought to attend continuation classes for at least two years. Yet, during the whole year 1888-9, only 1424 children entered the evening classes, the average attendance being only 706. The total cost of the classes was £730, and the grant earned £288.* These classes are said to be well advertised, and frequent concerts, lectures and games are arranged, as well as summer evening classes; but there is a want of persistent attendance, largely due to long hours of work, for which the Board can make little remedy until it has compulsory powers. But as it is, there should be a greater variety of subjects, and more prizes should be offered. Every facility is offered by the Board for the distribution of free breakfasts.

Bristol shares, of course, with other places, the need for (*a*) the Abolition of School Fees, (*b*) the Extension of the School Age, with Abolition of the Half-time System. The standard of exemption has recently been raised to the VI. Standard.

BRISTOL'S EDUCATIONAL ENDOWMENTS AND CHARITIES.

A summary of the accounts of the Endowed Charities of Bristol in 1873,† gave the total gross income at £48,356, of which nearly

* Figures obtained from Bristol School Board.

† Digest in Vol. xiii. of Accounts and Papers on Endowed Charities, 1873, quoted at p. 175 of Report of Bristol Committee on the Poor.

£20,000 was for educational purposes, £12,000 was for alms houses, £8,000 for distribution and general uses of the poor, and about £5,000 for church purposes.

Speaking generally, the large eleemosynary charities of Bristol are a source of pauperism, and in great measure will continue to be unwisely and wastefully employed until collectively administered. Recent changes have diverted a much larger proportion to educational purposes, and at this moment £11,000, or more than half the income administered by the trustees of the Bristol Municipal Charities, goes to support three schools, £9,000 being devoted to other purposes.

These three schools are the Bristol Grammar School (a first grade school, 300 boys, fee £9s to £13 11s. 6d.), the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (160 Free Scholarships, which entitle to residence, food, clothing and education, free of cost), and the Redmaids' School (80 girls).

Other charitable endowments go to support Colston's Boarding School, Stapleton, 100 foundationers entering before ten years of age, and leaving at 15 or 16, £5 per annum being charged for clothing, £2,500 of endowment being required for the School. The Merchant Venturers' Society administer this educational trust, and have established two schools of their own, aided by their corporate funds, which must be very large, although they maintain reserve with regard to their exact extent. They are (1) the Merchant Venturers' School—400 boys, fee £5 a year; (2) the Colston Girls' Day School, 300 girls, fee £4 per annum, opened in January, 1891, to provide education up to 17 years of age; to this school any surplus from the Colston Hospital Trust is diverted.

Clifton College (started by a limited liability company with £10,000 capital, and opened 1862; incorporated by Royal Charter, 1877), the best known educational institution in Bristol, cannot be counted among the endowed schools, and the majority of the boys it educates come from outside. Two High Schools for girls (Clifton and Redland) educate over 400 girls, and the Cathedral School (boys) about 150.

The educational ladder is perhaps less incomplete in Bristol than in other parts of England. There are charities for retaining Boys and Girls in the higher standards of Elementary Schools; and for the second step up the ladder, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital provides 100 places to be competed for among children from the Elementary Schools; Colston Boarding School provides 80 more; the Redmaids' School provides 30 for girls, and the Colston Girls' Day School will provide about 30 more. There are also nine Peloquin Scholarships tenable at the Grammar School for boys from elementary schools, and six more for boys under 16, for which Queen Elizabeth's Hospital Boys have the preference; these scholarships consist of a remission of all fees, and an annual payment of £5 in cash. There are 12 exhibitions of £6 tenable at the Merchant Venturers' School for elementary school boys from SS. Philip and Jacob Without, or St. George. But when all is said and done, these various agencies, each with its own expensive financial staff, provide without the least attempt at a common organisation some sort of secondary education

for less than 1 per cent. of the population, which is immensely below the cheap and efficient provision of a really scientific education in such towns as Stuttgart and Zurich.

The modern demand for technical education has been partially met by the expansion of the old Trade and Mining School into the well-equipped Merchant Venturers' School, and by the provision made by Bristol University College (opened October, 1876, about 500 students, exclusive of medical students), on its scientific and engineering side.

But there is no comparison between Zurich with its renowned Polytechnic costing £20,000 a year* and Bristol University College without endowment other than the sum of £1,200 a year from the Treasury, granted only since 1889, eking out a precarious existence with gifts from Balliol and New Colleges, Oxford, and with small classes of evening students.

A representative Bristol Educational Council has existed since 1888, and is doing what it can to influence public opinion; but it is a purely voluntary agency, and has no authority. Secondary education, if it is to be efficiently organized and co-ordinated, must be placed in the hands of a representative public body, which would be forced to consider the question of some systematic provision of technical education, and the application of the grant now made from Imperial taxation for that purpose, which for Bristol will amount to about £5,000.† It is high time that secondary education should be organized by local authorities, in the interests of those taught, and also in the interests of the general body of teachers, whose training, prospects, and dependent position sadly need improvement. If this were done, the University College would assume its natural place at the apex of a properly constituted system, and one of its functions would be to act as a public training college, free from test, alike for elementary and secondary teachers.

BRISTOL'S PUBLIC LIBRARIES.

Bristol's fifty thousand families have the use of one central and five branch public libraries, maintained at an annual expense of about £4,000, defrayed from the Libraries Rate at one penny. The St. Philip's branch, which is in the poorest district, has the largest number of readers on the premises, and the Redland branch, in the well-to-do district, the largest number of borrowers for home reading, mostly women and girls. The chief reforms needed in the administration of these public libraries appear to be the following:—

(1) Opening of the reading rooms on Sundays; (2) Provision of additional branches in the growing new districts; (3) Delivery of free popular lectures on "What to read," and other literary subjects; (4) Besides legislation to enable the penny rate to be raised,

* Report of Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, vol. i., p. 191.

† An excellent provisional scheme for spending this sum has been submitted by the Bristol Educational Council to the Technical Instruction Committee of the Town Council. (See p. 108 of Second Series of Reports on Utilisation of New Fund under Local Taxation Act, 1890, by National Association for Promotion of Technical and Secondary Education, 14 Dean's Yard, Westminster. One shilling; April, 1891.)

means should be adopted for preventing any savings being swamped at the end of the year in the Borough Fund, as happened lately to £2,000 or £3,000 with which it was intended to open a new library.

BRISTOL'S WATER TRIBUTE.

Bristol depends for the supply of the first necessity of urban life upon the Bristol Waterworks Company, which has a capital of £1,200,000. On the ordinary stock (£444,000), in 1885 and several previous years, 10 per cent. was paid, for 1886, 9½ per cent., for 1887, 9 per cent., for 1888 and 1889, 8½ per cent. The amount raised by water rates in 1889 was £85,435.

If the water works had been constructed by the Town Council, the annual interest payable upon their cost would have been, at 3½ per cent. only two thirds of the amount annually received by the shareholders.

The supply is partly direct from springs at Barrow Gurney (five miles) and from Sherborne: the water from the springs at Watery Combe and at Chewton Mendip, 16 miles from Bristol, is intercepted by the storage reservoirs at Barrow Gurney (holding 350 million gallons) and thence brought into the city. "The water is supplied at constant service, and the supply per head is calculated at about 24 gallons a day, but the Company has power to make an annual charge for each closet flushed, in addition to the charges for other domestic purposes: hence the majority of outdoor closets throughout the city are dependent upon hand-flushing. There is little doubt that the condition of a very large number of closets would be materially improved, if the charge were omitted on houses of the artizan class." (Report of Medical Officer of Health for 1889, p. 20.)

Such are the results, financial and sanitary, of making the supply of water a source of private profit. Bristol is the only provincial municipality having more than 150,000 population which commits this error. Liverpool and Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds, with hundreds of other local authorities, agree in the enormous public benefit of the "municipalization" of the water supply. The Sheffield Town Council bought up its waterworks in 1887, at a cost of over £7 per inhabitant. The market value of the Bristol waterworks stock and shares probably does not exceed £1,800,000, and even at this price the Town Council could make an annual profit on the purchase, besides securing important sanitary advantages, and fair treatment to all those employed in the water service.

BRISTOL'S ANNUAL GAS BILL.

Bristol gives a virtual monopoly in the supply of its main source of artificial light to the Bristol United Gas Light Company, the statistics of which are as follows:—

YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER, 1889.

paid up Share Capital	paid up Loan Capital	Capital Total	Receipts	Expenditure	Profit
444,250 10 per cent. paid as dividend	129,250 At 4 per cent.	573,500	186,429	152,548	33,881

Ten per cent. dividend is regularly paid on the ordinary stock—three times as much as the Town Council would have had to pay on the same amount of municipal stock. Over 170 local authorities have now "municipalized" their gas works, to the great advantage of their constituents. Why should not Bristol imitate Bradford, for instance, and, taking over its gas-works, reduce the price to the consumer, secure fair treatment of the gas-workers, improve the lighting of its streets, courts and common stairways, and make an annual surplus in aid of the rates?

BRISTOL'S TRAMWAYS.

The internal communications of Bristol are mainly in the hands of the Bristol Tramways and Carriage Company, which makes a profit out of its gratuitous use of Bristol streets, and pays its ordinary shareholders five per cent.

YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER, 1889.

Share Capital paid up	Mortgage Stock at 4 per cent.	Cost of Works and equipment	Receipts	Expenditure	Profit
165,000	45,000	215,000	36,830	30,625	6,205

To earn this profit for the tramway shareholders, the tramway workers are kept on duty over 14 hours per day. Over 30 local authorities own their own tram-lines, comprising a quarter of the whole mileage open. This enables them to secure the interests both of the public and the tramway workers, by suitable conditions in their lease of the lines. The Glasgow Town Council, for instance, exacts the following conditions:—

"Only such persons as can satisfy the Magistrates' Committee that they have a thorough knowledge of the City and the duties of a car conductor, shall be licensed as such. The working day of conductors and drivers shall not exceed an average of ten hours. The conductors of cars shall be provided with proper uniform, consisting of tunic, trousers, and cap, and no conductor shall be permitted to be on duty without uniform. A uniform great-coat shall be provided for the winter months. No conductor, driver, or other officer shall be permitted on a car unless his clothing is in good order and his whole person clean and tidy. The lessees shall provide proper sanitary conveniences for the drivers and conductors at places where these are requisite, and as may be agreed on with the Corporation."

The Huddersfield Town Council goes further. Under a special Act of Parliament (45 & 46 Vict. c. 236) it works its own tramways without the intervention of any contractor or other middleman. The consequence is that the Huddersfield tramway servants enjoy an Eight Hours Day, and the Huddersfield citizens low fares and an annual profit to spend for public purposes.

Under the terms of 33 and 34 Vic., c. 78, sec. 43, the Bristol Town Council will be able to take over the tramway at the expiration of 21 years from its construction, on payment only of the actual value of the plant and stock. This period will be completed, as regards the first portion of the line, in 1893. Bristol citizens should insist on the Town Council taking advantage of this option, and obtaining power, as Huddersfield and Liverpool have done, to work the lines under direct municipal management.

BRISTOL'S DOCKS.

The shipping trade of Bristol has, notwithstanding the growth of the city, declined during the last few years, while that of Cardiff and Newport has enormously increased. During the last five years the tonnage entering the port of Bristol was as follows:—

1886	...	1,344,013 tons, viz., Foreign, 638,254, Coastwise, 705,759
1887	...	1,301,805 " " 611,546, " 690,259
1888	...	1,278,554 " " 615,666, " 662,888
1889	...	1,326,688 " " 642,138, " 684,550
1890	...	1,293,373 " " 624,222, " 669,151

In 1884 the city made a determined attempt to maintain her commercial position by acquiring the docks at Avonmouth and Portishead, which had been already constructed by private companies. These docks, being near the sea, are better adapted than the old quays to the conditions of modern trade. But at present the normal traffic only takes up two-thirds of the available accommodation, and the Portishead Dock, which is almost exclusively used for grain, is worked at an actual loss. The price paid for the Avonmouth Dock and warehouses was about £550,000; the cost of the Portishead Dock and granaries £250,000. The total Dock debt of £1,875,022 (March 1890—Statement of the Corporation)—or, taking the figures in the statement of expenditure on capital account to April 30, 1890, issued by the Docks Committee, £1,901,440—is made up as follows:—

Original Works up to 1848 (Old Dock Company)	...	...	£424,781
River and Harbor Improvements (Act of 1865)	...	...	230,000
Railway Wharves, Nos. 1 and 2	...	...	110,000
City Dock (Granary, Dredger, Sheds, Wharf, etc.)	...	...	240,877
Avonmouth Dock (Dock, Warehouses, Pump, Sheds)	...	...	582,696
Portishead Dock (Dock, Granary, Stores, Workshops)	...	...	259,212
Parliamentary and other Expenses	...	...	9,491
Discounts on Debenture Stock...	...	...	6,338
 Total Expended	...	...	1,863,395
Unexpended Balance	...	...	38,045
 £1,901,440			

To this ought to be added a sum of £89,920 raised under the Portishead Dock Act, 1871, to subsidise the Dock, which forms part of the debt of the Corporation proper.

The loss on the working of the Dock Estate and City Quays combined, after allowing for the interest on loan capital and sinking fund, was £5,772 and £18,911 for the years ended 30th April 1889 and 1890 respectively; and for the next year the loss will be heavier. The Borough rate which is being levied in aid of the Dock Revenue is £29,000 for the current year, as against £18,000 for the year ended 30th April 1890.

For the year ended 30th April, 1890, the three accounts—Bristol, Avonmouth and Portishead—stand as follows:—

	Bristol.	Avonmouth.	Portishead.
Ordinary Revenue	£64,370	£60,118	£15,767
Ordinary Expenditure	38,944	47,802	17,008
Balance available to meet } Interest, etc.	25,426	12,316	Debt Balance } 1,241
Interest, etc.	38,727	22,874	11,686

The adverse balance has to be met out of the Borough rate (£18,000 having been voted for that year in addition to the Harbor rate on City Houses, £2,360).

Against this must be set the advantage accruing to the general prosperity of the town from the efforts made to keep up its trade. Before the city acquired the Avonmouth and Portishead Docks, the receipts from dues on tonnage and rates on goods fell from £44,411 in 1876, and £45,060 in 1877, to £41,363 (1878), £37,409 (1879), and £29,688 (1882). If this fall had continued, a single generation might have reduced the port of Bristol to the condition of Bruges. The gain to Bristol by the acquisition of these docks is therefore unquestionable.

BRISTOL'S COLLECTIVE PROVISION FOR THE SICK AND INSANE.

Comparatively little has been done directly by the public authorities of Bristol towards collective provision for the sick. The poor law infirmaries and infectious hospitals which in London provide out of the Poor rate two-thirds of the total number of hospital beds, supply in Bristol only 510 (see p. 4) out of a total of 1,070 hospital beds. Much additional public provision for the sick is needed before the ideal is attained of a hospital bed available for every case of serious illness in the city. The lack of adequate accommodation for infectious cases is nothing short of a public scandal. Meanwhile the various medical charities, which are under no public control, to some extent supply the want of public provision.

Bristol has three hospitals for the reception of in-patients: the Royal Infirmary, the General Hospital, and the Hospital for Sick Children and Women (102 beds); besides these there are various Dispensaries for out-patients, and such special institutions as the Eye and Lock Hospitals and District Nursing Society. The Bristol Lunatic Asylum is under the control of a Visiting Committee of the Town Council, the total expenditure being £14,555.

The two larger hospitals are utilised for the medical school of Bristol University College. Their most important statistics for 1889 are given below:—

	Approximate Income from Property	Other Receipts	Normal Expenditure	Beds	In- Patients	Out- Patients
Royal Infirmary	£3,000	£7,000	£12,000	264	3,139	26,367
General Hospital	2,000	5,000	8,000	150	2,488	22,838

Of the Infectious Hospital accommodation, 246 beds are in the hands of the Guardians, available for pauper cases only (100 for small pox, 126 for fever, 20 for erysipelas cases), but up to 1889 there were only 44 beds in temporary structures, available for non-pauper cases; steps have since been taken to provide further accommodation. With the present hospital provision, more than one disease cannot be isolated at a time, and during the 1887-8 small-pox epidemic, only cases of small-pox could be admitted. (Medical Officer of Health's Reports, 1888 and 1889.)

CONCLUSION.

This summary review of the social and financial condition of Bristol inculcates many duties upon its public-spirited citizens; but it teaches one lesson above all its others, and that is the need for

extending public control and administration to all the services, both material and educational, which are of prime necessity to the community. Since the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when Bristol sprang into importance as a sheltered and conveniently situated trading mart at the confluence of the Avon and Frome, flanked by a strong castle, its history for five hundred years records the continuous growth of commercial prosperity and of municipal liberties. At first a part of the King's manor of Barton, and under a King's reeve, Bristol was allowed, early in the thirteenth century, to elect its own mayor; and the ferm or rent of the town which belonged to the king, and was in lieu of rents, fines, and of revenue derived from fairs and markets, was leased to the mayor and commonalty. In 1225 the ferm was let at £245 a year; in the reign of Henry VI. it amounted to £460; it was reduced by Richard III., and was finally redeemed in the reign of Charles I.* This is the reason why the city to-day enjoys so large a sum from its City Property. The two signs of a free and self-governing community for which Bristol burgesses contended in the earliest days were popular elective government and municipal control of the revenues from city land and from profitable public services. A free city, in the view of our forefathers, should not be beholden to any landlord—not even a royal landlord—nor subject to any monopoly. The plain duty of the commonalty at the present moment does not differ one jot from the principles which constituted the life and breath of the patriotism of free Bristolians six hundred years ago. By a strange irony of fate, the Socialist who appears to himself, no less than to others, to be the advocate of brand-new revolutionary changes, has only to search the annals of the past to find that in his principles of municipal reform he is, after all, in truth, a most consistent Conservative. If the large income from its city property proves the wisdom of the city fathers of the past, the deficits on the Dock account prove the folly of those of the present day in allowing private competition to usurp the field and to spoil the game, when, in the end, the city was forced to step in at the eleventh hour. But, in the case of the Docks, it was the private self-interest of a number of merchants and others which forced the city into the policy of undertaking their management. This is a very one-sided application of municipal Socialism, if the city should only deal with concerns that will least pay. The public self-interest of the mass of citizens must be aroused to overcome any opposition of land-holders and shareholders, and to acquire for the profit of the community those monopolies which the municipality can manage.

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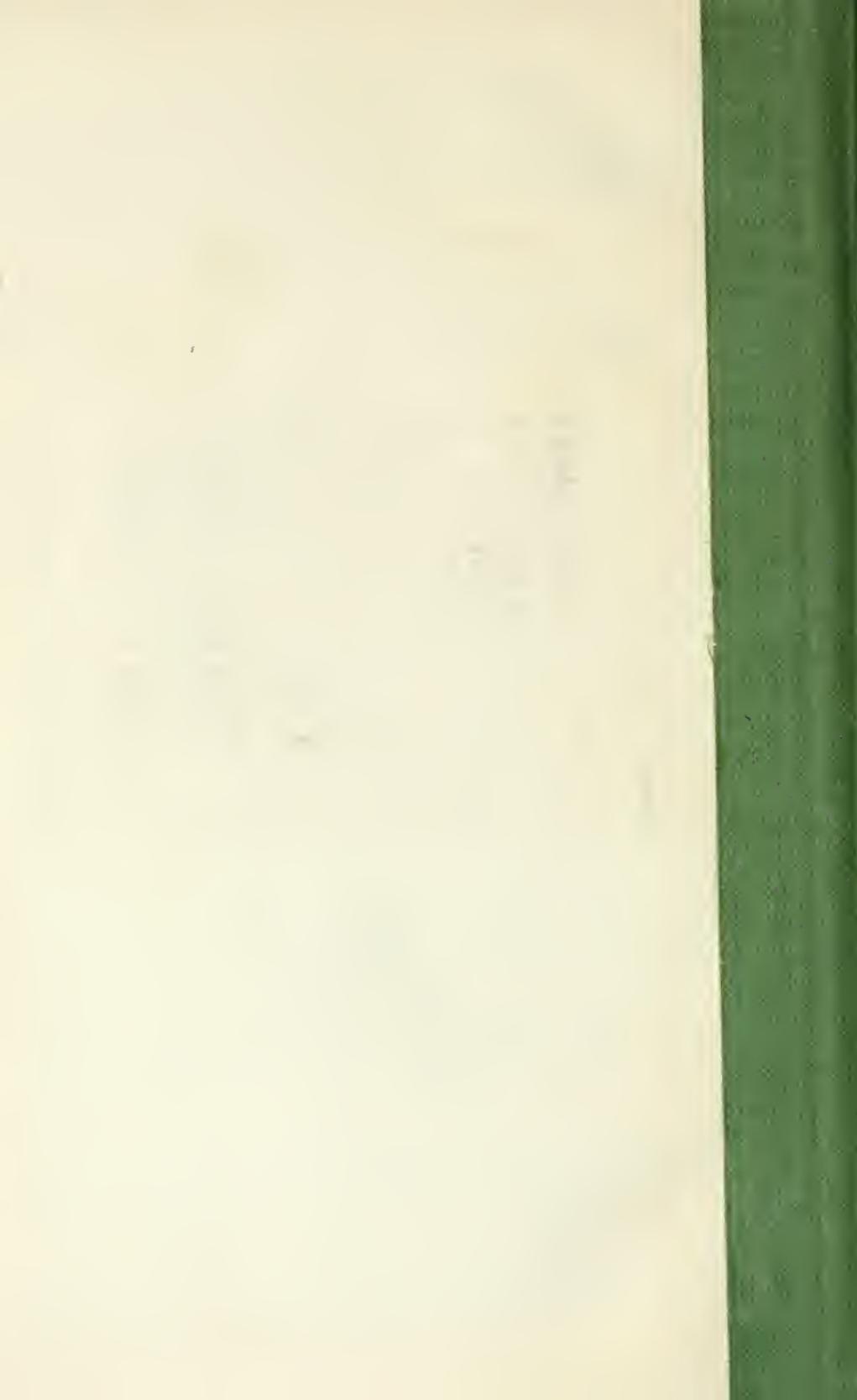
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